



**PILE OF PAPERWORK:** The Environment Court hearing for Newmont's Golden Link started on Monday (3 December) in Waihi. Independent commissioners at head table. From left, Dr P Mitchell, Alan Watson (chair) and Dorothy Wakeling.

# East end must not be allowed to suffer

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The RMA hearing into Newmont Waihi Gold's Golden Link project is in its second week with commissioners Alan Watson, Dr P Mitchell and Mrs D Wakeling hearing evidence and submissions.

The first week was devoted to evidence from the applicant, Newmont Waihi Gold, with its witnesses giving evidence on noise, vibrations, social impact, economic effects, impact on property and heritage.

The second week is the opportunity for submitters to have their say.

Day one the three commissioners heard submissions from organisations which supported the project.

They included NWG employees and contractors (Macmahon, Dave Carter Leighton), the EMP Union, HG Leach, Kerry Single and Waihi Fire Service plus individual submitters who support Newmont.

Then it was the time for the neutral submissions, which included a submission from Warwick Buckman.

He said Newmont needed to do its utmost to keep people employed and that one of its extra responsibilities was to ensure the Waihi East residents did not get loaded with the cost of this development. He said he was not just talking about dollars.

In a measured, comprehensive and sensible submission covering many of the aspects which are affecting Waihi East and then Waihi as a whole, he said he had attended WERG meetings and public seminars where explanations were put forward from both sides.

"The desire for the east to not become rundown, to not have large numbers of rental properties he understood, but do

not condemn the east end landowners to bear the brunt of the cost of continued mining." He said people needed to have redress at any time to ensure the east end does not suffer.

He had a problem with NWG's 95 per cent level of achieving the required vibration levels saying it was unsuitable and that it was close to one blast in 20 being outside the parameters.

"Would we be happy with a dairy farmer accidentally dumping effluent into a stream every 20th day."

"More powerful deterrents need to be in place to make these imperatives irrelevant."

He asked for more frequent reviews. A 20-year permit over a wide area is too overarching.

People needed to be thinking about now, 10 years on and 10 years on again.

"If I was a landowner in other parts of Waihi, I would also be concerned that strong protections were in place now because there is the potential the same issues affecting Golden Link residents could one day affect other sections of Waihi."

He summed up saying there needed to be stronger protection of and/or reimbursement for residents who are now bearing the brunt of the rest of the Waihi community's feel good factor. On Tuesday submissions were heard from POWER led by its counsel Robert Enwright. On Wednesday, it was the time for WERG submissions and its witnesses followed on Thursday by another collection of individuals.

On Friday submissions will be heard from Te Kupenga O Ngato Hako, Pauline Clarkin and other iwi witnesses.

The commissioners will then retire to consider their verdict which is expected to be made public in February.